

# PUBLIC HEALTH 3.0

## Spokane, Washington

### Highlights



July 11, 2016

As part of the implementation of Public Health 3.0, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) is hosting a series of listening sessions to learn about the challenges and opportunities experienced by local public health entities in their work to promote healthier communities.

The meetings also spotlight local public health innovations, creating a valuable opportunity for community leaders to collaborate and develop strategies to improve public health. Below you'll find highlights from the Spokane meeting, which took place on July 11, 2016.

## Public Health Infrastructure

Washington State has a decentralized governmental public health system that includes 35 local health jurisdictions, the [Washington State Board of Health](#), tribal governments, and other partners.

The State Board of Health monitors the public's health, informs state health policy, and oversees the local health departments and districts, including the [Spokane Regional Health District \(SRHD\)](#). SRHD has approximately 250 staff members.

The Board of Health is SRHD's governing body. The Board of Health unites the cities and county in a cooperative effort to oversee public health. The 12-member board includes 3 Spokane County Commissioners, 3 Spokane City Council members, 2 Spokane Valley City Council members, 1 elected official representing small cities, and 3 citizen representatives.

## What is Public Health 3.0?

Public Health 3.0 is a challenge to business leaders, community leaders, state lawmakers, and federal policymakers to incorporate health into all areas of governance.

## Spokane County Fast Facts

**Population:** 490,945

**Median Income:** \$50,432

**Median Age:** 37.1

### Sources:

- Vintage 2015 Population Estimates
- 2010–2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
In conjunction with the Spokane Regional Health District

## Health Problems and Challenges

Since 2013, Spokane County has experienced a decline in fruit and vegetable intake and an increase in vaccine-preventable diseases, illicit narcotic use, domestic violence, suicide, deaths, and depression among youths.

Several social and systemic issues affect residents' health. Eighty-five percent of jailed criminal offenders suffer from a mental health issue, and unemployment is at 9.6%, nearly twice the national rate. Many residents also suffer from underemployment.

Health disparities also persist in the county, particularly between black non-Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native residents, and white residents. Non-Hispanic whites are living longer than any other racial or ethnic group.

## Health Outcomes

According to the [County Health Rankings](#), Spokane County ranks **25<sup>th</sup>** out of 39 counties in Washington for overall health outcomes.

The leading causes of death are cancer and heart disease, which account for about 40% of deaths in the county. However, the percentage of deaths attributed to these 2 diseases has dropped by about 6% since 2000.

Unintentional injuries are the third leading cause of death among residents of all ages and the leading cause among residents ages 1 to 44.

## A Culture of Health

[Priority Spokane](#) serves as a catalyst and convener for focused improvements in economic vitality, education, the environment, health, and community safety. Priority Spokane received a Culture of Health Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). According to Priority Spokane, public health priorities must affect a significant number of people in the community, affect various areas within the community, and be actionable.

"If we can focus on the collective goal and let go a little bit of the how, we'll allow ourselves to be more innovative and flexible in terms of finding solutions that work."

– Sarah Lyman, Empire Health Foundation



## Cross-Sector Partnerships

In Spokane, public health, health care, and other sectors — including education, business, and transportation — collaborate to improve health outcomes and strengthen the public health infrastructure. For example:

- Spokane Public Schools worked with Priority Spokane to conduct a study of 7,000 students over 2 years to learn when they were falling behind and dropping out. The findings revealed tipping points in 3 categories: attendance, behaviors, and course completion. Together with partners — including RWJF, community members, Gonzaga University, and lawmakers — Spokane Public Schools and Priority Spokane developed and implemented strategies to address each tipping point and increase educational attainment.
- [Greater Spokane Incorporated \(GSI\)](#), the Spokane region's Chamber of Commerce and economic development organization, works with local partners to educate businesses on the economic and community value of building a skilled workforce. According to GSI, the return on investment for early childhood education is \$1.89 on every dollar spent, and children ready to start kindergarten are better equipped to take advantage of career opportunities when they graduate high school.
- [Empire Health Foundation](#) provides flexible seed funding for upstream public health efforts and is an active partner in achieving results. The foundation has invested in obesity prevention among school-aged youth, trauma-informed practices within schools, child welfare system foster care placements, and shifting to a pay-for-performance delivery system model.
- The [Spokane Regional Transportation Council \(SRTC\)](#) and SRHD have partnered on active living and transportation design. Efforts include the Walk. Bike. Bus. program, which promotes alternative modes of transportation, and the Complete Streets Program, which aims to create roads designed and operated with users in mind. SRHD supports SRTC in advocating for transportation policies that support physical activity and environmental health.

"It's very easy to talk about criminal justice reform. It's very easy to talk about education reform. It's very easy to talk about public health reform. But really what we're here to talk about is the intersection of all of that work."

– Shelly O'Quinn,  
County Commissioner,  
City of Spokane



## Bright Spots of Innovation

Spokane is taking outside-the-box approaches to address critical issues that affect the community. For example:

- The City of Spokane has implemented a community court model, an alternative to the traditional model for processing non-violent misdemeanors like trespassing. Offenders can attend community court in the public library and work with a social service provider there to sign up for needed benefits, like substance abuse treatment or social security. This approach can help offenders rehabilitate and avoid jail.
- Several partners have implemented [THEZONE Project](#), a place-based collective impact initiative to improve health, education, housing, safety, resident engagement, and economic development. Inspired by the [Harlem Children's Zone](#), THEZONE Project seeks to unlock the potential of every child. It was named a finalist for a Promise Zone designation by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- [Neighborhood Matters](#), an initiative led by SRHD, is a targeted, community-driven, community-based approach to reducing health disparities in Spokane's East Central neighborhood. SRHD works with residents to identify what they need to be safe and healthy. This initiative has spurred the development of community gardens and farmers markets and an effort to get a full-service grocery store.

"We need to be a partner with the community, not at them."

– Rob Crow,  
City of Spokane

## Existing Data Resources

In Spokane, local data often drives programs and policies. For example:

- To address public health priorities, Priority Spokane analyzes data, develops and implements data-driven strategies, and evaluates progress. In 2009, Priority Spokane analyzed graduation rates to identify educational attainment as a priority indicator.
- The City of Spokane, SRTC, and other entities rely on community data to engage elected officials and effect policy change.
- The SRHD Data Center track health statistics for Spokane County.



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## Looking to the Future

Leaders from Spokane County plan to continue their efforts to foster creative, productive partnerships between sectors that impact health. For example:

- The City of Spokane received a MacArthur Grant for \$1.75 million to support its work with the Spokane Regional Justice Council to address the intersection of incarceration and public health. Using the grant, Spokane County aims to reduce the jail population by 21% over the next 3 years and reduce racial and ethnic disparities.
- Priority Spokane and the SRHD will implement an initiative to address homelessness among school-aged youth.

## Contact Information

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